PZ
3
.H227T
Copy 2

FT MEADE
GenColl

HENRY HARLAND
(SIDNEY LUSKA)

Class PZ3

Book .H227T

Copyright No. Copy 2

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

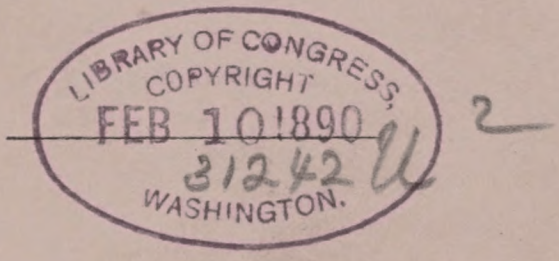
Two Voices

Two Voices

BY

HENRY HARLAND
(SIDNEY LUSKA)

AUTHOR OF "GRANDISON MATHER," "MRS. PEIXADA," "THE YOKE OF THE THORAH," "A LATIN-QUARTER COURTSHIP," "AS IT WAS WRITTEN," ETC., ETC.



CASSELL & COMPANY, LIMITED
104—106 FOURTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

PZ3
.H227T
Copy2

COPYRIGHT
1890
By O. M. DUNHAM

All rights reserved

PRESS OF W. L. MERSHON & CO.,
RAHWAY, N. J.

Two Voices

Dies Iræ, ... 7
De Profundis, ... 69

Dies Iræ

Dies Iræ.

I HAVE been convicted of the murder of Theodore Knight. On next Monday morning I am to receive my sentence from the lips of the Judge who presided at my trial. The burden of that sentence will be "confinement at hard labor in the State Prison for the term of my natural life." And though I am innocent of the crime they have convicted me of, I believe I shall be able to support my punishment with some degree of indifference. I have suffered so much during the past year that my capacity for suffering seems to have become exhausted. But there is one thing that still has power to

cause me pain, one thing that I cannot bear with any sort of equanimity, one thing the mere thought of which puts me nearly beside myself with despair,—and that is that you should deem me guilty.

The true story of the death of Theodore Knight I told upon the witness stand at my trial; but it was in itself so improbable a story, and I told it with so little detail, so little verisimilitude, that I suppose nobody who heard it placed the least credence in it. I was laboring under great excitement and nervousness, my mind was weary and confused, my heart was filled with wretchedness; and so by my testimony I succeeded only in making an unlikely story seem more unlikely still.

I am alone now, and in quiet; and I believe that if I bend my whole mind to it, I shall be able to tell that story over again here with such

fulness and exactness, that you cannot doubt it, provided only that you will do me the justice of reading it through. I cannot bear to have you think me guilty. I can bear anything but that. To have you despise me as utterly base and ignoble ; to have you think me guilty of the crime by which your happiness was destroyed—I cannot bear that. I implore you to read what I shall write, to the end.

As you know, and as was established by the prosecution at my trial, Knight and I were old and intimate friends. Our friendship had begun when we were freshmen at Harvard College, and it continued for five years after our graduation. We came from Cambridge to New York together, and here took rooms together. We had no secrets from each other, and Knight knew how deeply I was in love with you. He was the first man to be told of our engagement,

and the first also to be told when that engagement was broken off. From that meeting with you at which you confessed to me that your heart was changed, that your love for me was dead, that you knew you never could love me any more, I went home half-crazed with pain, and poured all my sorrow out to Knight. He was my confidant. He knew the whole story perfectly from the beginning to the end.

After that I went abroad, and remained there for three years. Then I came home. Not that I had got over it, but I was sick of Europe. I had found that absence and distance from you did not help me. I craved a sight of you; I longed to feel that we were near each other, that I was in the same city with you; and so I came home.

Knight and I had not kept up a regular correspondence while I was away. I had no

heart for writing letters, and Knight, as I knew very well, had always regarded letter writing as the most irksome and disagreeable of tasks. But shortly before I sailed from Havre I sent him a little note, warning him of my coming; and so I was not surprised to find him waiting upon the dock to greet me at my arrival. I was not surprised, but I was greatly pleased. We had not seen each other for three years, and no two friends were ever closer or fonder than he and I. Our meeting was of the most cordial nature.

By and by he asked me this question: "And the wound, old fellow, the wound that drove you abroad,—it is quite healed by this time, I suppose?"

Then I told him no; that the wound was open still. He was silent for a little after this. Then all at once he said: "I must tell you some-

thing before we go any further, Norbert. It will pain you, but it would be wrong for me to let things go any further without telling it to you."

He paused, and I said: "Oh, I suppose she's married. I have made up my mind to that."

"No, she isn't married yet," he answered; "but she is engaged."

"Well, it makes no difference to me," I said; "I have understood all along that I must expect to hear of her engagement or marriage sooner or later."

For some minutes now Knight did not speak, nor did I. At last; "You do not ask who it is that she is engaged to," he said.

"I don't care," said I.

"But you must care. That is what I must tell you," he insisted.

"Well, if you must tell me, tell me," I returned.

"She is engaged to me," he said, in a very low voice.

What happened then was proved by the prosecution at my trial. We had a most violent quarrel. I was wild with pain and astonishment, and I said things that were savage and unjust. He retorted hotly. The result was that we separated in anger. It was my fault entirely. He had done nothing that I could rightly blame him for,—nothing dishonorable or unfair. So our long-standing friendship came to an end.

It was further proved at my trial that we did not meet again until the night of the 6th of May—the night, that is, of his death. On the next day, the 7th of May, you and he were to be married. It was proved that two or three days earlier I had written him a note saying that I felt that I had been in the wrong in our

quarrel, and that if he was willing, I should like to see him once before his wedding, and shake hands with him. I said in my note that I knew, of course, we never could be friends again in the old way, but that for the sake of our former friendship I should like to meet him once more, and take back the bitter words that I had spoken at our separation. That note was put in evidence as an exhibit at my trial. And the note that Knight sent in reply was put in evidence as an exhibit also. Knight replied by requesting me to call upon him at his house on the evening of May 6, at ten o'clock. He had bought a house in West Forty-first Street, —No. 13.

As I have said, I told the true story of my visit with Knight on that evening, when I was a witness in my own behalf at my trial. Now

I will try to tell it again, with greater precision and detail.

I rang the door bell of his house at exactly ten o'clock. The door was opened to me by Knight himself, who without speaking gave me his hand, and led me into the hall. Then, after the street door was closed behind us, he said: "Harry, I am very glad that you have come. I thank you for offering to come."

"I could not help it, Theodore," said I. "I knew I had been quite wrong in our quarrel. I had no right to begrudge you your better luck. I could not feel easy in my conscience about it. I thought it would be good for both of us if before you married her we should meet, and I should withdraw the things I said that day."

"It is very generous of you," he answered. "My happiness would have been gravely

alloyed if to-morrow had come and gone, and you had remained my enemy."

After that neither of us spoke for some time. Finally he said: "Come upstairs with me, to my den."

I followed him upstairs to the back room on the top floor. He had fitted it up in the most luxurious manner as a library and study. There he bade me be seated, and, producing a bottle of wine and glasses, he said that we must "drink a cup of kindness for the sake of auld lang syne." We drank together, and then he sat down opposite me, and for a while we were silent.

"Well, Theodore," I began at last, "if there ever was a mortal whom another might reasonably envy, you're the man."

That was the thought which filled my mind, the feeling which filled my heart, how enviable

he was, and how I envied him. What single good gift had the gods withheld from him? Here he was, thirty years old, in glorious health, with abundant wealth, not a care in the world, an innocent soul, and, to crown all, you for a wife!

Yet, as I spoke, I saw come into his face a look that puzzled me. It was very fugitive; in a second it had passed. But it left me with a vague feeling of misgiving. His lips had parted slightly, his eyes had become wide open and fixed, with pupils dilated; his general expression had been that of sudden fright,—the scared look of a man abruptly startled by a reminder or an intimation of impending danger. It forced upon me the conjecture that Knight had in his mind some reason for anxiety, for alarm, which at my words had recurred to his consciousness, bringing a twinge of terror,

But, as I say, it was very transitory, crossing his face and departing like a shadow.

"Yes," he rejoined, "I am singularly and richly blessed; but your inference is wrong. I am the least enviable man alive. If it were not for one thing, I should be the happiest. My happiness would be unmitigated, absolute. But as it is—well, I give you my word, you err if you envy me."

"One thing," I repeated. "There's the humanity of it. Everybody has one thing too much or too little. Well, in your case what does the one thing happen to be?"

"A truth of life to which my eyes have been opened, to which I cannot close them any more," said he.

"What truth of life?" I questioned.

Knight waited a little before he spoke, gazing the while abstractedly at the wall.

Then: "I doubt if you will understand me," he returned. "It will be better for you if you don't perhaps. Though, perhaps, in the long run, it is on the whole best to acknowledge the truth. You were always very imaginative, Norbert, and therefore always very sympathetic. If you were less so, or if we had not been so intimate, I should not dare to mention it to you. Do you know, I have never mentioned it to any one as yet,—not even to Elinor. I have never mentioned it, but I believe it is never altogether absent from my thoughts."

"And it is—?" I prompted, as he paused.

"It is this. It is death. It is the fear, the constant hideous anticipation of death."

His face was ghastly as he pronounced the word. All the color had faded from it. Even the lips were whitish. And it seemed, too, all at once to have lost in substance, and to have

changed in structure. It seemed as though the cheeks had become sunken, the eyes hollow. The corners of the mouth were drawn down as if he suffered physical pain.

Shocked, perplexed, frightened—"Death?" I repeated. "The fear of death? What do you mean?"

"Yes, death: the fear of death. It is that which blackens the whole sky for me, and turns my life into a nightmare."

"But I don't understand. Do you mean—for God's sake, do you mean that there is anything the matter with—with Elinor?"

"No, no; not Elinor. Not Miss Kingslake. Myself. The knowledge that sooner or later I have inevitably got to die, and the frightful uncertainty when death may come. How do I know? It may come twenty years hence; it may come in twenty hours, in—in twenty

minutes." He shuddered and shrank deeper into his chair, casting a glance around the room, as if he feared that death in person might be lurking in one of the corners. It was a most distressing sight—this strong, young, and otherwise manly man thus overwhelmed and undone by extreme terror. "How do I know? What do I know? All I know is this, that it is bound to come some time. Isn't that enough? The horrible uncertain imminence of death! Oh, it is hideous! It turns my life into an agony, an unceasing suspense and horror. All day long, everywhere I go, it goes with me, and at night, if I sleep, I dream of it. See! We are seated here in comfort, in security. In what we call security, at least. But where is there the smallest real security against death? Not in stone walls, nor iron bars, nor suits of mail, nor chests of

medicine. How do I know that I may not be dead before this time to-morrow?"

He leaned forward, speaking with intense passion. And that scared look was vivid in his face. Now he sank back again into his chair, and breathed quick and hard, as if exhausted.

"Good heavens, Knight," cried I, "do you mean to say that you've got heart disease?"

He laughed—dryly, unmirthfully. "Heart disease! Hear the materialist! No, nothing of that sort. I'm in perfect health. I have no disease."

"Well, then, for the love of reason, why do you bother about death? Have you an enemy prowling around after you with a loaded gun?"

"I don't believe I have any enemies—no. Not now, that you and I are reconciled."

"Well, then, in the name of common-sense, why do you bother about death?"

"Have I got to die some time or not? Can I hope for immunity from death? Can you—can any man—assure me that I shall not be dead within a week? How, then, may I help 'bothering' about death? Shall I drug myself into obliviousness?"

"I confess, Knight, I'm at a loss. You nonplus me. Do you fancy you're an exception to the rule? We've all got to die some time, I'm credibly informed. But those of us who possess sane brains in sound bodies—we don't waste much strength worrying about death. We get our lives insured, and let the companies do the worrying. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. No, I don't understand you. What sickly frame of mind have you wrought yourself into? Here is a strong man, rich in all the good things of life, and instead of enjoying them and being thankful for them, he

sits trembling and chattering at the thought of death! And that on the eve of his wedding-day! To-morrow he's to be married, and to-night he talks of dying! Pshaw! You're morbid, puerile, and cowardly. A sensible man never thinks of death. *Liber homo de nihil minusquam de morte putat.*"

"That, Norbert," Knight rejoined quietly, "is the falsest word that ever a great philosopher spoke. The very contrary is true. It is the emancipated man—*liber homo*—the man of courage and enlightenment—it is he who does think of death. Not to think of death is ostrich-like, is indeed puerile and cowardly, and I may say morbid. Death, the one inevitable and universal experience, the one birthright in which all men share alike, the common goal to which all life is but a progress, the conclusion, the solution, the fifth act of this mystifying,

inexplicable drama of life,—not think of it! Here is life, a Sphynx enigma, perpetually vexing the mind and the soul of the man who has a mind and a soul to vex. There is death, which holds the enigma's key. And yet you say don't think of death,—banish it, blink it, forget it. That, I tell you, is stupid and superficial, puerile, cowardly, and morbid. What theory, what hypothesis, what principle of life can you frame, except as you think of death? And some one theory and principle of life, for daily use, you must frame, or else you cannot live, you cannot transact the business of life. Furthermore, according to your conception of death, your assumption of what death holds in store, must your whole conception of life's meaning, purpose, and duty be shaped and colored; in one word, your ethics. And, finally, what semblance of a religion can you have,

if its cardinal dogma does not deal with death? Not think of death! How unthinking is he who does not think of death! You rivet your gaze on the surface of things, and shun the deep places. You feed yourself upon the outward appearances of things, and leave the inward realities untasted. You consider only the transitory, and forget the eternal.—But how, if you are human, how can you *help* thinking of death? You have just quoted to me the falsest word that a great philosopher ever put his name to—*Liber homo de nihil minusquam de morte putat.* Now, I will cap your quotation with a better one, because it is a true one: In the midst of life we are in death. How can you help thinking of death? How do you dull your mind to that degree? Could Damocles help thinking of the sword? Is not the sword of death impending over your

head—yes, indeed, your devoted head—every hour and minute of your life, daytime and nighttime, wheresoever you go, from the first breath you draw in your cradle, until all at once it falls? Dare you, I asked awhile ago—dare you lay a wager that it will not have fallen by this time to-morrow? How do we know? What do we know? Within this very hour your dead body may be lying at my feet, or mine at yours. Not think of the black hand forever raised to strike you! Not think of the grim companion who stalks forever at your elbow! When the black hand may deal its blow at any instant; the grim comrade at any instant pluck your sleeve and whisper, 'Come, you are mine'! Not think of death! Oh!"

He had begun, as I have noted, by speaking quietly; but as he went on his composure van-

ished, giving place to an excitement which, toward the end, had intensified into something like ecstasy. His voice increased in stress and volume, his eyes burned, he leaned forward and gesticulated earnestly. Now he fell back into the depth of his chair, and closed his eyes, and laid his hand across his forehead, where the swollen veins showed purple against the white skin.

I own I had been impressed and stirred by what he had said, or by his manner of saying it. In my emotion I forgot the hundred excellent reasons I had to urge against him. A wiser man than I, however, observing how the subject agitated his interlocutor, would have dropped it, introducing a new one. I shall never cease most bitterly to reproach myself for my folly in pursuing it. If our conversation had stopped at that point, the act, the

crime, that followed it, would very probably never have been committed.

In my unwisdom I rejoined: "Well, even so! What of it? Why should you fear death so? What is there to be afraid of? Yes, indubitably, each mother's son of us may die at any moment. But why should we dread death, shrink from death? The bodily agony, even if supreme, cannot be of long duration; and as for the future life, if there is one, we have no reason to expect that it will be worse than the present."

"Ah, there is just the point!" cried Knight. "The future life! You say, if there is one. I am convinced there is."

"Well, even so! What of it? What I fail to understand is, why you should fear it. What shadow of a reason have you for imagining that it will be less endurable than the life we know here?"

"It is not a question of imagining, Norbert; it is a matter of demonstrable fact. In the future life,—here is the horrible knowledge that lies upon my conscience day and night, torturing it like a coal of fire, racking me with an utter horror and dread of death,—in the future life my portion will be hell."

I looked at him. His face was livid. His lips were drawn back until they exposed the teeth. His fingers were clenched. His eyes stared fixedly at the wall in front of him, with a light in them that was almost maniacal.

"Hell! What? What! Good Lord, Knight, what ails you? To make you talk like that, to make you look like that? Are you hoaxing me? Are you acting? Or are you imbecile? Hell! What do you think you mean?"

"I am not hoaxing you, nor acting a part, nor am I imbecile. I mean what I say, abso-

lutely, exactly. After my death I shall find myself in hell."

"May I be permitted to ask a question?"

"Twenty if you like."

"Very well. Since when have you believed in hell?—you who, of all rationalists, used to be the extremest?"

"Since I cut my wisdom teeth. Since my eyes were opened to the obvious. I never was more of a rationalist than when, plucking up my courage, I dared to follow my reason to the furthest depth it would lead me, and there recognized the necessity, the inevitableness of hell."

"I declare, Knight, I think you are losing your mind. What reactionary talk is this? Those of us who are enlightened, in this age of the world's development, have seen clearly that given any personal future life at all, it

must be a gradual and natural sequel to this life,—a logical continuation of it,—that the soul will begin there where it left off here; that it is the height of absurdity to expect an immediate and immense translation to a heaven or to a hell. Yet you—Do you live in the nineteenth century or are you floundering in the ignorance and the superstition of the twelfth? You talk of hell! . . . . Well, taking hell for granted, what crimes are you guilty of, what deadly sins have you committed, that you deem yourself doomed to hell?"

"None that I know of. I have committed no crimes to my knowledge; and I believe my worst sins have been venial. But that is neither here nor there, or rather—no, that again is just the point. I will speak of that in a moment. What strikes me at present is the sublime conceit of 'those of us who are enlightened.' What

new and special revelation have you received—you who are enlightened—that you describe with such confidence and such complacency the nature of the future life? Oh, the comfortable, the flattering theology of the men! The future life shall be but a natural and gradual sequel to this life—a logical continuation of it. We shall begin there where we left off here—smoothly, easily, without break, without violence! I tell you, man, in the future life every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. There is no reason, no purpose, no justice, no excuse, for a future life which shall be but an easy and comfortable continuation of this; so that I, who have the start and the advantage here, shall have the eternal start, the eternal advan-

tage, over yonder poor devil at this moment begging, or perhaps stealing, or it may be even murdering in the streets. In the streets, Norbert, shivering under the open sky, in body and mind and soul low and evil and loathsome; while I sit here in my safe house, before my fire, well fed, well clad, clean and virtuous and beloved. The valley must be exalted, the mountain and hill laid low; the crooked must be made straight, the rough places plain. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. There must be a heaven and a hell, to correct the inequalities, to atone for the injustices, that we are in the midst of here. Hell? heaven? Of course I don't mean a hell of fire and brimstone, a heaven of music and glory. I mean a hell and heaven of the spirit; two opposite conditions of the soul."

Knight had spoken with such unquestiona-

ble sincerity, it was impossible not to take him seriously, and answer him respectfully. Therefore I said: "Well, granting all that, granting hell, heaven—everything you wish,—I have not yet understood, and I am particularly interested to learn, why you anticipate hell as your individual lot. You tell me you are guilty of no crimes, and that your worst sins have been venial. I, who know you pretty well, I should say that you have led a singularly moral and virtuous life. Why, then, hell for you?"

"As I said a moment ago, the very point of the matter lies just there. I am rich, Norbert; and it is easier—it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

I lost patience. "Oh, come, Knight," I protested, "you don't mean to say that you

believe such—such—" I hesitated for a word.

"Such what?" demanded Knight, turning large, surprised eyes upon my face.

"Such—oh, well, you know, that's utterly unreasonable. That's nonsense. Because a man chances to be rich,—because he has inherited wealth or legitimately acquired it,—he must be excluded from the kingdom of God! Oh, you know as well as I do, that's preposterous."

"Unreasonable? Preposterous?" Knight repeated, with the air of a man who mistrusts his hearing.

"Exactly so."

"You—you forget, perhaps, who said it?"

"No, I remember perfectly who said it."

"And do you venture to assert of any smallest word that fell from His lips that it is unreasonable or preposterous?"

"It was to your construction of the word that I applied those terms. It wasn't meant literally."

"Can you tell me of any figurative construction that it will bear?"

"The 'eye of a needle' referred to was a famous gateway, through which it was difficult for a loaded camel to pass,—difficult, mark you, but not impossible. It means, therefore, that the average rich man may have some difficulty getting into the kingdom of heaven, because the average rich man is apt to be purse-proud and ungenerous and over-fond of the pleasures of the flesh."

"A deceit and a sham, Norbert," Knight cried; "invented by wealth-loving ecclesiastics, themselves rich, to the end of reconciling their unchristian practices to such shreds of Christianity as they had left. According to that

reading, Christ's declaration is virtually meaningless, and I think we shall be safe in assuming that Christ always meant something when He spoke."

"Well then, it means a bad rich man."

"It doesn't say so. As it stands it covers all rich men."

"Well, then, it is unreasonable. It never could have been so meant by Christ. The notion that all rich men, good and bad, without discrimination, are destined to perdition is monstrous. I know no sane person who will maintain the contrary."

"I am sane."

I was beginning very seriously to doubt this. But I confined myself to saying, "Well?"

"Well, I am sane, and I will maintain the contrary. It was meant literally; it is literally true. It is easier for a camel to go through the

eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

"Which is a mere repetition of your previous assertion, not justified by the faintest scintilla of argument. I should be curious to hear your reasons, though, if you have any. It's a singular thesis. I should be interested to know what circumstances you can allege in support of it. But waiving that for the moment, there's a manifest way out of your difficulties. You believe yourself doomed to hell because you are rich. Well and good. Sell all you have and give it to the poor."

"Ah, yes if I could—if I could. But there's the worst of it. I can't."

"Can't? Oh, well, then you simply lack the courage of your convictions, and hell will serve you right. If a man sees his salvation tangible before him, but is too weak to grasp it,

he has no one but himself to blame if he is damned."

"Oh, Norbert, you are obtuseness itself. Materialist that you are, you conceive by the word 'riches' material riches only. Those indeed I could give to the poor. But that would not mend matters in any smallest degree. The poor would remain as poor as ever; I should still be a rich man. Material wealth is nothing. It is my spiritual wealth,—my wealth of soul and mind,—which damns me. That I can neither sell nor give away, nor sequester, nor in any wise forfeit nor get rid of. That is entailed upon me. So long as I draw the breath of this life in this body I shall be a rich man, and that is my damnation. Superior parts and culture, the love of the woman who to-morrow will be my wife, refinement, virtuous predispositions—there is my wealth—I cannot alienate it."

I looked at the man in amazement. "I give you up," I faltered. "So well as I comprehend it, you mean that you are to be damned for your virtues! It's a paradox which I own myself unable to cope with. Go on. I am waiting to be convinced that you are not insane."

"I said at the outset, Norbert, that you would probably not understand me. I said, too, that perhaps it would be better for you if you should not understand me ; better for your peace of mind, I meant. But then, on second thoughts, I said, it is perhaps always best in the long run to recognize and confess the truth. Thus far you have not understood me ; you have not seen the truth. Now, if you like, I will make you understand me ; I will show you the truth so vividly that you shall not forget nor doubt it ever again. If

you *like*, mind! I make that stipulation; for I warn you beforehand that the fruit of the tree of knowledge is bitter, and that if you taste of it, it will poison your life as it has poisoned mine. It's for you to choose."

"Go ahead," I said lightly, "I guess I can stand it."

"At your peril, remember. Well, here; you cried out just now, 'he expects to be damned for his virtues!' and you derided that for a paradox. Thereby you showed that on these subjects you have done no independent thinking; that you have swallowed whole the empty husks of formulas which constitute the diet of those people who take their creeds at second hand, their theologies by hearsay. You showed that you still profess the ethical doctrine which deems it meet and proper that a man should be rewarded for the good he does

and punished for the evil; saved for his virtues and damned for his sins. Now I say, that is indeed a paradox—a fallacy, repugnant to the feelings of every man who has a sense of fair play, inadmissible to the mind of every man who will give the matter two minutes of honest thought. For consider a little. It proceeds upon the assumption of a free will—a free will, and a consequent moral responsibility. But you, who know a few principles of science, you know as well as I do that there is no such thing, that there can be no such thing, that no such thing is conceivable in man, as a free will, nor, therefore, a moral responsibility. You know that we are one and all of us under the iron and all-inclusive dominion of Necessity; that we can no more help doing what we do, than we can help being what we are. According to the law of cause and effect, you

know that what I do is the unavoidable result of what I am at the moment when I do it; and you know that what I am at that moment is the unavoidable result of my heredity and my environment; in other words, of my two sets of experiences: my preconceptual experiences—that is, the experiences of my ancestors back to the beginning of life; and my postconceptual experiences—that is, my experiences since the planting of the seed from which I sprang. You know that I am no more accountable for my moral character, nor for my intellectual abilities, than I am for the structure of my body or the color of my eyes. You know that the sinner is no more to blame for his sins, than the good man is to praise for his good deeds; that the idiot is no more to blame for his infirmity, than the philosopher is to praise for his genius; that the hunchback is no more

to blame for his deformity, than the grenadier is to praise for his handsome figure. You know, in one word, that we do not make ourselves. If I am an idiot, it is due to my heredity and my environment, which have given me this structure of brain ; if I am a poet, it is due to my heredity and my environment, which have given me that structure of brain. By the same token, if I am a knave, it is because my heredity and my environment have shaped me thus and so ; if I am a hero, it is because my heredity and my environment have shaped me so and thus. Is the tiger to blame who waxes wroth at the scent of blood? Can the poor beast help it? If I pick a pocket, it is because I cannot help it ; if I cut a throat, it is because I cannot help it ; if I save a life, it is because I cannot help it ; if I write a good book, it is because I cannot help it ; if I ruin my life through a folly

of my own commission, it is because I cannot help it. In no case am I to blame, in no case to praise. Factor Necessity, and you obtain Heredity and Environment. Well and good. You know all this as well as I do. Now here is what I want you to explain: If yonder wretched wife-beater, thief, cutthroat, liar, besotted brute—if he is not to blame for his misdoings, since he cannot help them, since he is the poor prisoner and victim of necessity, why, I beg you to explain, why should he be damned for them? Why not as justly damn him for the color of his hair?"

"Just so! Why, indeed?" cried I. "My dear Knight, you have expended a vast deal of energy and ingenuity in knocking over a man of straw. I have not said that he should be damned. I say no one should be damned—that the very notion of hell is in itself intoler-

able. But certainly I can't see why, if the sinner isn't to be damned for his sins, the virtuous man should be damned for his virtues. He couldn't help it, either. As justly damn *him* for the color of his hair."

"No, no; stop there. You go a step too far. You forget, you ignore, the principle of fair play, of turn and turn about. For one moment look with me upon the world around us; contemplate a little the life-drama in which we are actors. See! Here is a world in which one man, thanks not to himself, but thanks to Necessity,—to his heredity and his environment,—to his birth, to his inherited faculties and predispositions, to his education,—grows up to be healthy in body, strong in intellect, virtuous in his impulses, happy, rich; rich, it may be, in the material comforts of life, but richer in spiritual wealth, in his clear con-

science, his high and able mind, his generous heart, in the love and the respect which he is empowered to win of his fellows. And here, Norbert, here in this same world, another man, thanks not to *him*self, either, but thanks again to Necessity, to *his* heredity and *his* environment,—*his* birth, *his* inherited faculties and predispositions, *his* education,—grows up diseased in body, dull in mind, depraved in soul, a coward, a liar, a criminal, despised and rejected of all decent men, poor in all the good things of life, poor in spirit. Now there—there is an obvious, gross, terrible injustice. Is there not? Horrible to think of, horrible to admit, yet absolutely undeniable. You will go with me in saying that. And in view of it, one of two things we must believe is true—either this world is a monstrosity, created and governed by an arch devil; or else, some-

how, some time, beyond the grave, the injustice that appalls us here must be amended, atoned for, wiped out. Either this life drama is a wanton tragedy of woe and evil—an *ad bestias* spectacle devised for the gratification of the arch fiend—or else, in the fifth act—the act upon which the curtain of death shall rise—Justice shall come upon the scene, and exalt the valley and lay low the hill; giving to the poor wretch who has had his hell of pain and evil here his fling at heaven; to me, who have had my heaven here, my taste of hell. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy, and *vice versâ*. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Into that kingdom, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter. Look, Norbert, look! Here

am I, Theodore Knight. Thirty years ago I was born—on the 1st day of June, 1856. I was born in the lap of luxury, with a golden spoon in my mouth, of a long line of healthy, virtuous, intelligent, and highly educated ancestors. Watch my bringing up; in a home of virtue and culture, by a good mother, a good father; where I am sedulously guarded from every breath of evil, where I am tenderly nursed when I am ill, petted when I am well, corrected when I do wrong, encouraged when I do right; where every influence—material, mental, moral—that bears upon me, is calculated to make me healthy, intelligent, and good. On that same day—June 1, 1856—let us say, another baby, willy-nilly, is born into this world. He is born of a long line of criminals and paupers, people of low intellects, bad instincts, foul bodies. His father is a drunkard, a thief,

a wife-beater. His mother is a drunkard, too, and something worse besides. He is born in the slums of this city, in a room reeking with filth. He is brought up in squalor, under the auspices of that father and mother. His playground is the gutter. His playmates are the offspring of parents as abandoned as his own. He is ill fed, ill clad, ill cleaned, ill taught. He is beaten for nothing. Every influence, material, mental, moral, that bears upon *him* is pestilential; is calculated to degrade and brutalize him in body and mind and soul. Oh, Norbert, how can any man who has a heart, how can he contemplate inequality and injustice like this, and continue to revel in his better fortune? Into the race of life these two competitors enter, one in perfect training, the other worse than untrained and congenitally inferior; one given a long start and every ad-

vantage, the other handicapped and saddled with a heavy burden! But stay. Follow us a little further. We grow to maturity, that other man and I. At the age of thirty—to-morrow even—I, rich, happy, virtuous, intelligent—I consummate my earthly bliss by marrying an angel of womanhood, whose love I have been suffered to win, and whom I love. He, brute beast that his heredity and his environment have made him—he, a mere puppet in the hands of necessity—he commits a murder, and is hanged, or shut up blood-stained in prison for the remainder of his days. What manner of world is it in which such things can happen? unless, indeed, you go with me in the conviction that beyond the grave our accounts—his and mine—shall be squared and balanced; that there he, who sowed here in tears, shall reap in joy, while it will be my turn to sin and

suffer. 'Oh,' some shallow people cry, 'he had his chance. Other men have risen high from beginnings as low as his; other men have sunken low from beginnings as high as yours. He had his chance to rise, you had your chance to fall. You were both called upon to choose between good and evil. You chose the good, he chose the bad. It was his fault, it is to your credit.' All which, as you and I know, Norbert, simply begs the question—is superficial and unscientific to the last degree. For, in the first place, since we were born unequal, no one will pretend that we had equal chances; and in the second, when it was time for us to choose, how came I by the propensity which resulted in my choosing the good? How came he by the propensity which resulted in his choosing the bad? You know what the answer is—heredity and environment. You know that

the evil is one which we can neither deny nor explain nor amend. But beyond the grave—beyond the grave! There the tables will be turned. The creditor will receive his due, the debtor will pay his debt. They that mourn shall be comforted. The last shall be first, and the first shall be last."

"Dear Knight," I rejoined, "you are grappling with the old problem of evil; but you have not solved it, though you think you have. You have removed it from this side the grave to the other, that is all. Evil is still there; and that is the incomprehensible thing—that there should be evil at all. You have not solved the problem. Reduced to its lowest terms, your philosophy is this: that two wrongs make a right. There is wrong here; therefore, as you say, 'to square accounts,' there must be wrong there. You have not solved the prob-

lem; you may not solve it. It is insoluble by man, like all the ultimate problems of life. And since you may never solve it, I warn you to let it alone. Much brooding over it can do no manner of good, but immeasurable harm. That way madness lies. Even now see how it has embittered and darkened your life. You have jumped to a terrible conclusion, and instead of finding rest there, you find only horror and increased vexation of spirit. Think—think of Elinor, Knight. To-morrow she will be your wife. How dreadful for her that her husband should hold such a creed! She does not know it? You have never mentioned these matters to her? But is she not a woman? And does she not love you? And what with her woman's intuitions and her wifely love, you may be sure that, whether she speaks or remains silent, she will feel that there

is something wrong—a shadow upon your life, a secret between her heart and yours. Oh, it is terrible for her! All the ultimate problems of life are insoluble, unthinkable, by man's brain. The book of life is opened to us at just one page; the remainder is hermetically sealed. That page we may read. It is covered with perplexities, inconsistencies, anomalies, anachronisms, that baffle and balk us; and with cruelties and foulnesses that appall and horrify us. But the connection of that page with the pages that go before and come after,—what the plot, motive, meaning, purpose, of the whole book may be,—that we do not know, we have no means of learning, we cannot guess, though some of us perpetually try to do so. The page we see, written in rock and fire, in tears and blood, more harrowing than a page from the annals of the Spanish Inquisition, we cannot

hope to understand, nor to explain, nor to reconcile to our sense of right and justice, because the premises and the conclusions are hidden from us. Man cannot by seeking find out God. Nature, red in tooth and claw with ravine, shrieks against our creed. We must take our God on faith, believing where we cannot prove. We can prove nothing: we can only trust. 'Behold I know not anything; I can but trust.' Tennyson has sung the whole pain perfectly. You—you have devised one hypothesis out of a million that are possible, and to that you cling as if it were God's authenticated truth, instead of one feeble man's imagining. There are a million possible hypotheses, I say. Another friend of mine, whose rest like yours was destroyed by the omnipresent spectacle and mystery of evil, has come to believe in a universal law of compensation,

holding that no one sentient animal, oyster or man, prince or pauper, is in the long run better off than another; that the higher your organization and the more intense and complex your enjoyments, so is your susceptibility to pain greater, so are your sufferings also intenser and more complex. Still another man I know professes the doctrine of universal metempsychosis—that each spark of consciousness, each soul, is an indivisible and indestructible entity, destined to pass through every form, phase, and experience of life, from polyp to man, from slave to emperor, from sinner to saint, until, in the end, having completed the cycle, having exhausted all possible experiences, it shall attain the condition of eternal rest and omniscience—Nirvana. What do we know? How do we know? Questions you yourself propounded. We can but trust —:

That somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill.
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt and taints of blood;

That nothing walks with aimless feet,
That not one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete,—

that there is indeed one far off, divine event, toward which the whole creation moves. We know nothing, we can know nothing. Speculation is worse than futile. And that is why the brave man, the emancipated man, never thinks of death."

"Well," said Knight, "there's none so blind as he who will not see. And perhaps I should congratulate you upon your ability to silence the harsh voice of life, crying aloud terrible truths, with a few rhymes from Tennyson. For me, I cannot do it—I cannot do it. For me, I can see no other way out of the difficulty

than a general reckoning and balancing of scores beyond the grave."

Ever since our talk had left the personal ground, and proceeded upon the abstract, Knight had shown no symptoms of that terror which had weakened and unmanned him at the outset. But now all at once he turned deathly pale, and his eyes riveted themselves upon the wall before him with an expression of such livid fright that one might have thought he saw a ghost there. Huskily, almost in a whisper, "Norbert, Norbert," he called out.

"What is it? What ails you?" I cried, starting up and advancing toward him. He looked like a man on the verge of a fainting fit.

"What, what if—what if it should happen to-night?" he gasped.

"Happen? To-night? What do you mean?

What if what should happen to-night?" I questioned.

"If I should die to-night," he answered, in a tense, tremulous whisper.

"Oh!" I fell back in disgust at his puerility. I looked down upon him, white and huddled-up in his chair. "I'm ashamed of you, Knight," I said, "and you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"I'm past shame, Norbert—far, long past shame. When it comes to an issue between shame and terror, shame goes to the wall."

"So I see," I retorted scornfully. "Shame and self-respect."

"Yes, shame, self-respect, ambition, love—everything. Terror is the king of the emotions. They all fall down and hide their faces in its presence. Oh, Norbert, Norbert, I am a most unhappy man. And yet you

spoke of envying me, and you congratulated me."

"Well, I take that back. I don't envy you, and I withdraw my congratulations."

"Do you know—do you know what I am sometimes tempted to do?" he asked.

"No. What?" I queried.

"I am sometimes tempted to call out to the sword to fall, and so have an end of this suspense."

"I don't understand you," said I. "What do you mean?"

"I mean—I mean—why defer the inevitable? With this never-ceasing horror and dread of death upon me, why not take my life, and so learn the worst at once? It's the suspense—the daily, hourly, lingering suspense—that's killing me by inches. Oh, I would prefer hell itself almost to this sort of life. Look! I am

lying with my head upon the block, waiting for the ax to fall. It will be a relief—yes, it will be a relief when the executioner deals his blow. This waiting, waiting, waiting, waiting—oh, it is unbearable! Yes, I am often tempted to put an end to it. You see, I keep the means at hand." He opened a drawer of his writing table, and took out a pistol, holding it up for me to see.

"You coward!" I cried. "Do you forget that you are a betrothed husband?"

"No, I remember that; but I don't know—perhaps it would be better for her if—Well, anyhow, it would be very easy, wouldn't it?" He pointed the pistol at himself, as if to illustrate how easy it would be.

"For God's sake, don't do that?" I exclaimed. "Put down that pistol, Knight." And I rose from my chair, half-disposed to take it from him.

The next thing I knew I heard him give a sort of laugh, and then I heard the report of the pistol going off, and the room was filled with smoke, and I saw him lying bleeding at my feet.

* * * * * * *

There. I have told you the truth about Knight's death as fully and as clearly as I can tell it. The only wish I have left in life now is that you will read what I have written and believe that I was not his murderer. The circumstances have been all against me; I know that. He was to be married to the woman who had rejected me; we had quarreled; then I was closeted alone with him for two hours on the night preceding his wedding day; we were heard to talk together excitedly and vehemently during that meeting; and finally I had rushed downstairs, calling for help and saying that

Mr. Knight had shot himself; and the presumption was that I had shot him. I told my story, but it was intrinsically most improbable, and nobody believed it. Knight had kept his morbid state of mind a secret to all those who knew him. There was not a single shred of evidence to confirm my story, to show that I had not manufactured it from whole cloth. The jury found me guilty, and on Monday morning the Court will sentence me to prison.

But, as I have said, I can bear all that. I have reached a pass where I care very little what happens to me—where I am callous even to disgrace. Only it burns my heart like fire to know that you think me guilty; to know that you hold me accountable for the destruction of your happiness, and that you despise me as one base and ignoble beyond contempt.

May God move your heart to believe what I have written.

De Profundis

Note.

On Monday, January 7, 1889, there died in the Charity Hospital at New York a man named George Fairbairn, who had been an inmate of that institution since the previous March. Apparently he had neither friends nor relatives; at any rate he received no visitors, no letters; and the Public Administrator administered upon his few and poor effects. Among these, written in lead pencil, in a dog-eared account-book, was the manuscript from which the following pages are copied. Perhaps, as containing the somewhat curious death-bed reflections of a sinner, they may be worth printing.

De Profundis.

"WHOSO diggeth a pit shall fall therein; and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him."

"The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow. . . . Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken."

"They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind."

So testify the ancient Hebrew poets; unscientific, but, as some people still believe, inspired of God.

Folk equally unscientific, perhaps not equally

inspired, certainly not equally poetical, of far other days and lands, profess the same faith. Witness the commonplace: Honesty is the best Policy. Witness the homely Yankee theory of "come-upms." "Never fear," aver our Yankee soothsayers of the evil-doer; "he'll get his *come-upms* yet!"

Modern scientific persons reaffirm and corroborate the doctrine. Ask Professor Huxley, Mr. Spencer. Indeed, of inductive ethics, is it not the whole point and burden? That, if a man commit a sin, he will assuredly, sooner or later, this side the grave, suffer its consequences,—somehow, some time, before his death, he will have paid for every ounce and pennyweight of it with its equivalent of pain.

"In violating a moral law, *prima facie* a social law, but in the last analysis a natural law, the agent thereby disturbs the proper ad-

justment between himself and his environment: the result to him of such disturbance, of such maladjustment, must infallibly in the long run be discomfort."

"He who strikes a blow at his neighbor, strikes a blow at the world; he may depend upon it, the world will not forget to strike him back, very probably with interest compounded. The return blow may come in any one of a hundred, a thousand, different shapes; it may come to-morrow, it may come twenty years hence; it may come suddenly, in one fell, crushing swoop, it may come gradually, in slow and small installments: but come it inevitably must. Perhaps he will be caught red-handed, and hanged or locked up in jail; in either or in neither case, visited with the odium of his fellow men. Perhaps he may escape detection, and be left to digest silently, in

secret, his regret and his remorse. . . . But it does not matter how or when. He has hurled a boomerang into the air; he may count with serene assurance upon its reappearance now or anon. Indeed, it is as demonstrable as mathematics, a sin is its own penalty, just as virtue is its own reward; for, even if he is never found out, even if he suffers never a pang of contrition, yet by the precise value of his transgression will the transgressor be a poorer man in the good things of spiritual life."

"In so much as ye do it unto one of the least of these, my members, ye do it unto Me, says the Community; and unto Me, repeats the Race, of which the Community is but a nerve-cell; and unto Me, echoes the Universe, of which the race is but a ganglion; and unto Me, concludes the ultimate Mystery and Heart of Being, of which the Universe is but a phasis.

And—the meeting of extremes—very obviously, therefore, unto Yourself. For, if you cannot injure the part without injuring the Whole, no more can you injure the Whole without injuring its every part; and of that Whole, what are you but an integral, inseparable part?"

Thus, not to multiply quotations, is the law laid down by modern scientific and philosophic persons. That they speak a truth will scarcely be disputed. The only sin to which, for a moment, we might fancy their law inapplicable, is suicide. But for the sin of suicide is not payment made in advance?—in struggle, in despair, in terror, in self-abasement? And who knows how supreme the woe may be of that last lucid interval, after its bonds are severed, before the principle of life departs?

Very well, then (it is concluded), there is a

Spirit of Justice in the Nature of Things, after all. Wrong-doing is sure to be overtaken by Retribution. That is as it should be. Retributive Justice!

It is the question, *Whether the phrase, "Retributive Justice," is not a contradiction in terms?* which occurs to me; as perfect a contradiction in terms as "a straight curve," "a black whiteness." Whether there is so much as a scruple of Justice in Retribution? Whether, coming late or early, in driblets or all at once, there is anything but Injustice in Retribution? I know it is our impulse to exult at the spectacle of the good man triumphant, of the wicked man cast down. But is not that impulse one of our many unreasonable impulses? If we will put aside impulses and sentiments, and give ourselves to a dispassionate consideration of facts, fighting not shy of logical conse-

quences, how can we avoid this conclusion: that the heavy villain, found out by his villainies, and overtaken by Retribution, is, of all the persons in the play, the one who has been most unjustly dealt with?

As we sow, accordingly we must reap. Yonder miserable sinner, having sown the wind, must reap the whirlwind. Having dug a pit, he must fall therein. Having made his bed of thorns and thistles, the poor wretch must lie in it. Having done what he has done, he must meet and accept the consequences.

Even so.

And yet we know—unless all knowledge is illusion—we know, anyhow, as well as we know that matter is indestructible, that energy persists, that fire burns, that light illuminates—we know that yonder sinner could no more help sinning, than yonder weather-vane can

help pointing to the wind. We know that he could no more help doing what he did, than he could help being what he was; that he could no more help his conduct than he could help his complexion. We know that he was not a free agent, had not a free will. We know that no such thing is conceivable in man as a free will; that to assert a free will in man is to assert the most unthinkable of unthinkable things—is to assert an effect without a cause. Here, we know, is a fundamental law of all Existence: that the very fact of Existence necessarily implies the possession of Attributes, that is to say, of properties, of tendencies, of predispositions; therefore, that, given a Thing, an Entity, an Existence, it, as the primary condition of its being, possesses certain given attributes, which, under given circumstances, will assure its acting in a given

way, and not otherwise. That law, we know, is fundamental, primary, essential. It is the Law of Stability. All science depends upon it. Eliminate it from your equation of the Universe, and all science is dissipated; Existence is reduced to chaotic flux; everything is at sixes and sevens. And that law, we know, is as true of Men as it is of Metals and of Microbes.

We are not fatalists; fatalism was a phase of superstition. But we are naturalists, we are statisticians; we employ the scientific method; we observe the phenomena of life, and the possibilities of thought: therefore we are necessitarians. We own ourselves, one and all, helpless puppets in the hands of Necessity,—one and all, good and bad. The resultant of his heredity and his environment, the sinner did only and exactly what, under the circumstances, he

had to do,—only and exactly what Necessity compelled him to do. Yet he must pay the penalty of it in this world; and according to most theologies, he stands an excellent chance of being damned for it in the next,—he, who could no more help it than he could help the color of his hair; than the river can help flowing down hill; than the apple can help dropping to the ground; he, who, obedient to a law of his being, to a law of all being, simply followed the line of least resistance. Nature made him what he was, a knave; then Nature punished him for being what she had made him. Nature forced him to do what he did, a crime; then Nature turned around and whipped him for having done what she had herself exacted. Impulsively, thoughtlessly, beholding his affliction, we applaud it, crying, "Serve him right! There, you see, he's got his *come-upms!*" But

seriously, upon deliberation? Quelling our impulse? Has the wretch had justice? Has he had fair play? Let a man imitate nature: what shall we say of him? The next pallet to mine—I write in a Hospital—is occupied by a patient whose malady is hysteria. He is exceptionally sensitive to hypnotic influences; and him the doctors, in the interests of science, frequently hypnotize. When they have got him well hypnotized, they can reckon upon his doing obediently whatsoever they command. He will laugh, cry, hop about on one leg, etc., etc., at the word of the physician, docile as a raw recruit before the drill-sergeant. Now imagine that the doctor says, "Slap my face." The patient will certainly slap his face. What then if the physician prosecute him for assault and battery?—Yet that puny hypnotic had better power to

resist his hypnotizer than you or I have to resist Nature.—Oh, yes; I know; we have a sensation of will, even of free will: but what is it that goes to shape our will? What is it that determines the form our will shall take at any given instant? What but heredity and environment? Past environment and present environment: my condition of will at this moment being the last result of a sequence of causes that reaches back into eternity.

Let us suppose that I am born into this world heir to a bodily disease. Surely, it's not my fault. Nobody will blame me for it. I couldn't help it. Yet all the days of my life I must suffer for it. While you, my contemporary, you are born into this world heir to robust bodily health, which all the days of your life you shall enjoy. Is it to your credit? Shall I praise you for it? Could you help it? Yet

here we are, you well and happy, I ill and wretched. Now the puzzle is, why did Nature create us thus unequal? Who will cite that case as an illustration of how just she is? Or, if you like, I am born into this world heir to an infirmity of mind; you, heir to whatever is most precious in the way of mental gifts. All the days of my life, throughout the struggle for existence, I shall suffer the consequences of my congenital inferiority, while you shall enjoy the consequences of your congenital advantage. Why did Nature create us thus unequal? Will anybody cite that case as an instance of her justice? Or, finally, let us suppose, I am born into this world heir to a taint of the soul, to vicious instincts, evil predispositions; you, heir to a high conscience and a noble heart. All the days of my life, treading the path of the transgressor, I shall suffer the consequences of my sinful-

ness; while you will be reaping the rewards of your virtue. Why did Nature create us thus unequal? Yet will not all men cite that case as an example of her intrinsic justice? I am a liar, a thief, a ruffian, a bad lot, a specimen of total depravity—anything you like. You, who are all that is antipodal, you look askance upon me, cry fie upon me; and when you behold me overtaken and overwhelmed by the results of my unrighteousness, you declare, "Well, he got his deserts. He sowed the wind; he is reaping the whirlwind. The fitness of things is fitly preserved." I say, as justly cry fie upon the Ethiopian for his skin, the leopard for his spots. As justly cry fie upon me because I am hump-backed, or imbecile, or consumptive. Did I make myself? Did I make my parents, or even choose them? Did I make the world, which has provided for me

my environment? As justly declare that I got my deserts, because, having inherited a cancer, I went down to my grave tortured by its malignant throes. I could not help sowing the wind; yet see—I am reaping the whirlwind!

* * * * * * *

When I reflect upon my own experience, now so soon to culminate, I feel that I, so far from being blameworthy,—though, if my story were told, most people would have for me only scorn and condemnation,—I feel that, so far from being blameworthy, I am warranted in complaining of the treatment I have had at the hands of Nature. For many years I have smarted under my own scorn and condemnation quite as keenly as I could smart under another person's; now at last, when I come to think it all over, I see that I have wronged myself—I see that I have simply been one of

Nature's victims,—a burnt sacrifice upon her altar.

At the age of two-and-twenty, being what Nature had made me, acting as, under the circumstances, *I* had to act, as Nature, that is, compelled me to act,—following, in a word, the line of least resistance,—I committed a shameful and most awful sin ; and thereby I wrought the ruin of my entire subsequent life. At the age of two-and-twenty—as irresponsible as my neighbor in his hypnotic trance—I committed a sin the miserable consequences of which I have been suffering ever since, and must continue to suffer so long as memory lasts. Perpetually, since I woke up to a realizing sense of what I had done, and to a recognition of my hopeless inability ever to undo it, life for me has been pain,—a lingering moral sickness. So long as memory lasts, life cannot cease to be

pain for me. I know, the doctrine of Hell, of eternal punishment, has fallen into disrepute latterly; it has fallen into disrepute, though the truth of it would seem to be axiomatic. For if, beyond the grave, we preserve our individual identities at all,—if, in other words, we remember there what we did here,—Hell must needs be a reality for such as I, punishment must be coeval with remembrance. It is so easy to do evil, so hard to do good; so easy to undo good, so hard to undo evil. And until we miserable sinners have undone the evil of our doing, how can we know peace, except in obliviousness, which is annihilation? Sin, so often likened to a double-edged sword, cutting deep into the hand of him who wields it! The wound in my hand shall not heal, until I have healed the wound, obliterated the cicatrice, that I inflicted. Can that ever be accom-

plished? Can you ever put together again, making them whole and perfect as they were in the beginning, the fragments of the vase that you have shattered? Can you rebuild out of its ashes the house that you have burned? Can you breathe the breath of life anew into the nostrils of that dead thing whose life you have taken? Terrible power, more terrible impotence! With one sweep of my arm I can deal death unto the living; but, though I give my life to the effort, I cannot reanimate so much as one hair upon the head of the dead. Until I can undo the evil I have done, until I can re-do the good I have undone, I shall know no peace, except in forgetfulness, which means annihilation. Presupposing eternal life,—that is, eternal memory,—eternal punishment is axiomatic.

Now that I come to die, and review my life,

and compare it to other lives,—marking how it was maimed at the commencement of the race, and then sent limping on to the dread goal,—I insist I have good reason to complain. As I lie here in the valley of the shadow of death, upon the hard road of the transgressor—whence I can look up and watch you others, called my brothers, at work in the sunny vineyard, harvesting the sweet fruits of your virtues,—I cannot help wondering by what right our lots have been so different, yours and mine. We were each of us as straws upon the current of Necessity. Why was I sucked into the whirlpool of iniquity, why were you borne into the still waters of righteousness? We were children of the same mother. Why did we receive such unequal usage from her? She made me weak, she made you strong; she made me bad, she made you good. She led me into tempta-

tion, she delivered you from evil. She sold me in slavery to Ahriman, she enlisted you under the bright banner of Ormuzd. She forced me to do ill, she forced you to do well. And then—lo! she overwhelmed me with her displeasure, upon you she lavished her loving kindness. Now at last, having done with me, she hands me over to the King of Terrors.

How can you justify her ways to me?

Shrieking, red in tooth and claw with ravine, reeking with uncleanness, she brings children from her bowels, diseased, deformed, depraved, and flings them to her beasts, to be devoured: while their luckier brothers stand by, eye-witnesses, and smile, approve,—yea, marvel,—at her unfaltering justice; Retributive Justice, Poetical Justice! I, one of the unlucky, helpless, bound hand and foot, but not yet gagged, I may open my mouth and question if she is just.

At the age of two-and-twenty I was . . . Well, bad as I was, I was only what Nature, acting through heredity and environment, had made me. So, humanly speaking, so is a bacillus, a pestilence-germ, a bad thing; but it is only what Nature has made it; it can't help being a pestilence-germ. No more could I help being what I was at the age of two-and-twenty. And I did . . . Well, bad as it was, I did only what Nature, acting through heredity and environment, compelled me to do. My moral attributes, like my intellectual attributes, were determined by the structure and the chemistry of my brain; which, in turn, like my weight, like my stature, like the texture of my skin, like the color of my eyes, had been determined by my heredity and my environment. I was born whether I would or not. I had no voice in the selection of my an-

cestry, none in the selection of the time, place, or circumstances of my birth, none in the selection of the place or the circumstances of my bringing up. Upon each of these counts I must be acquitted of responsibility. Shapen in wickedness and conceived in sin, I was born. I was born into this world as a seed is planted in the earth. In me ten million rays of ancestral life were focused. The seed was planted. Heredity handed me over to Environment. Heredity furnished the potentialities, the predispositions. Environment began its work of developing them, and wrought steadfastly for two-and-twenty years. The result was—what I was. Now as to what I did: It was the simple and inevitable consequence of the circumstances of the moment operating upon the thing I was. Upon a different thing they would have operated differently. Upon that

thing they had to operate that way. Let the wind blow upon the sail of a wind-mill: can the sail help turning? Apply a spark to gunpowder: can the powder help burning? Cut my flesh with a knife: can I help bleeding? I, the thing I was, under the circumstances that were, could no more help acting as I did, than, under the circumstances that we have just assumed, the sail could help turning, the powder burning; than I could help bleeding if you cut my flesh with a knife. If I fell, it was because I could not help falling; yet I have been utterly cast down and forsaken. Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in? I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came. Ah, if that day had perished wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, there is a man-child con-

ceived! Why died I not from the womb? Why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? For now I should have lain still and been quiet; I should have slept; then had I been at rest.

* * * * * * *

What was it that I did?

I cannot see that that matters. I sinned. I cannot see that the peculiar form of my sin matters. Say I slew my brother, like Cain. Say I betrayed my Master for thirty pieces of silver, like Judas. Say I won a woman's heart and broke it, like too many to enumerate. What is the difference? The red stain of guilt is the important thing. The shape it happened to take, or the spot where it happened to fall, is of significance.

However, no harm can come from telling the specific truth. I wooed a woman; I won

her; and then I deserted her. I persuaded her to give over to my keeping the flower of her life. I took it, I wore it, I tore it, I threw it down and trampled it into the ground. When most her soul was filled and satisfied with faith in me, I showed her my cloven hoof,—the cloven hoof that I was born with, that heredity had entailed upon me. I pierced her heart with a sword I held; but the sword, though I knew it not, was double-edged; and presently, smitten with pain and faintness, I looked and saw the wound in my own hand. . . . Oh, gentle heart! Sweet heart! Could I but make *your* wound whole, remit the pangs I caused you, give back to you unchanged what was yours before I took it from you,—I should not care, though my wound ached and bled forever. Could I but put together again, making them one and perfect, as they were before my

fingers touched them, the petals of the rose that I have picked to pieces! Could I but abrogate the laws of being, reverse the course of time, abolish past events, bring back the snows of yester-year, revive the dead! That is the inexorable Fact which sits like an Incubus upon my breast, goading and irking me to desperation,—the harm I have done is done and can never be undone; the pain I made you suffer has been suffered, I can never neutralize nor alter that. Regret is as futile as it is inevitable,—regret that gnaws and gnaws, and yet is utterly, utterly in vain! "Could we be so now? Not if all beneath heaven's pall lay dead but I and thou, could we be so now." For when I awoke, it was to a realizing sense not only of how I had sinned, but also of what I had lost. Many waters cannot quench love. I awoke

to find that I still loved you, and hungered for you, and must starve without you—you, whose life happiness I had destroyed; you, between whom and myself, I had dug a gulf as deep as death; you, whom I had had, and wantonly flung away! "Life's prize, grasped at, gained, and then let go!" I awoke to dree my weird, haunted daytime and night-time by the vision of your sweet face white and rigid in an anguish of my causing; to carry with me thenceforth to the hour of my annihilation, like a coal of fire shut down in my bosom, a soul consumed by horror for what I had done, a heart distraught with longing for what I had forfeited. . . . And yet men have renounced the dogma of hell, and deny that punishment is ordained to be eternal. What is the thread that holds a human being's identity together?—what but Memory? And what is

hell but the Memory of the evil you have done and can never more undo?

Nessun maggior dolore
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria?

Nay; there is one greater: in the hour when you are chastened and repentant, to recall the hour of your extreme baseness, and to recognize the indestructibility of the evil you have wrought, the persistence of the evil forces which you have set in motion.

It is an old story. In fiction it has been played with till it is dust and ashes. In truth, it has happened to countless men and women in the past, and will happen to countless more in the future. But what manner of world is it in which it is possible for such things to happen? And why does it happen to one of us, and not to all of us? Why does it happen to this man so to sin, and this woman so to be

sinned against, and not to those two others? Why did it happen to her and to me, and not to you? Why were our lives overtaken by storm and darkness and destruction, and yours borne on prosperous breezes into the haven of pleasantness and peace? You know how precious your life is to you. My life was just as precious to me, her life was just as precious to her. Yet see—yours is saved to you and blessed; ours were cut down like the grass and withered as the green herb. That is what I cannot understand, puzzle over it as I will. I cannot understand the system by which Nature allots her good and evil gifts. Is it chance? fortuitous, blind chance? Then what a world! Is it design? . . . .

I have read in the books of certain complacent philosophers this affirmation: That Sin and Pain are admirable and indispensable insti-

tutions, in that they offer the resistance, the friction, necessary to the on-going of goodness and happiness. That is very nice for the good and the happy; but, it would seem, rather hard on the sinful and the painful. What manner of world is it in which she and I must be sacrificed to Satan, that you and you may attain unto God? in which I must work iniquity, and into smoke be consumed away, that you may depart from evil, do good, and dwell forevermore?

Another coterie of complacent philosophers object: "Just a little too much is attributed to Necessity. It is ninety-seven per cent. Necessity, and three per cent. Will." Happy those who can silence Truth with an epigram. Ninety-seven per cent. cause and effect; three per cent. effect without cause! For my part, I cannot conceive of effect without cause. If

my three per cent. of Will determined me to act thus, something must have caused it thus to determine me. If my three per cent. of Will determined me to act so, something must have caused it so to determine me. Or, ignoring for one instant your fallacy, how came it to pass that your ninety-seven per cent. of Necessity inclined you to the right side, while my ninety-seven per cent. of Necessity inclined me to the left or sinister side? Was that quite fair? Was it not ninety-seven plus ninety-seven, or one hundred and ninety-four per cent. easier for you to achieve virtue, than for me to achieve it? Was not my temptation toward vice one hundred and ninety-four per cent. stronger than yours? Happy those who can mask Reality in a formula! No! Hideous as the visage of Reality may be, to tear the veil from it, and gaze squarely at it, affords an

inexplicable delight. Harsh as the voice of Truth may be, there is no music known to man which affords such sublime exhilaration. If ye eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, you shall surely die; but in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods.

* * * * * * *

Looking backward upon my lost and broken life, like water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again, I ask why? Sinful, painful, futile, had it a reason or an excuse for being? Looking forward to the dread event now so near at hand, I ask what? Whither? Shall I remember there? If yes, Hell. If no,—is not forgetfulness equal to annihilation? And if I am to be annihilated, why was I born? Why is a thing begun that is to end thus? Or may there be some other finality, not imagin-

able by man, but sweet as the awakening from a bad dream?

* * * * * * *

I lie here in the land of darkness and the shadow of death, my whole head sick, my whole heart faint, my punishment greater than I can bear; I close my eyes, and am still for a little; then a voice sounds in my ears, crying, The secret things belong unto the Lord our God. I close my eyes, and am still for a little; and then there comes to me a beautiful strange feeling of serenity and lightness, and many years are as yesterday, and the far-away Sunday mornings of my childhood are present to me again. I see the sunlight pouring in through the eastern windows of the church, and the motes stirring and shining in it. I hear the organ rolling, the choir chanting, the words of the *De Profundis* going up:

Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice. Oh, let thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint. If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it! For there is mercy with thee; therefore shalt thou be feared. I look for the Lord; my soul doth wait for him; in his word is my trust. My soul fleeth unto the Lord before the morning-watch, I say, before the morning-watch!

THE END.

By the Author of Two Voices.

THE YOKE OF THE THORAH.

1 Vol. 16mo, Extra Cloth, $1.00. Paper, 50 cents.

"The love-story of the young Jewish painter, Elias Bacharach, and the sweet American girl, Christine Redwood, is a beautiful city idyll; and there is true and powerful tragedy, in the legitimate sense of the word, in the chapters which tell how the morbidly sensitive rather than weak nature of Elias came under the yoke, not of the Thorah, which for him had lost its sacredness, but of a stronger, calmer, and more persistent will than his own. . . . . The Rabbi Gedaza is one of the most impressive figures in recent fiction; and the pages which follow Elias's confession to his uncle of his approaching marriage with a Gentile woman are rich in a quite remarkable intensity of imaginative realization."—*The London Academy.*

GRANDISON MATHER;

Or, An Account of the Fortunes of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Gardiner.

1 Vol. 12mo, Extra Cloth, $1.25.

"A thoroughly charming domestic love story, a grateful relief from the flamboyant, high-strung novels of uncertain tone that have been too long the fashion."—*Toledo Evening Bee.*

"There is a wholesome sincerity and enthusiastic freshness about Mr. Harland's style which is very fetching."—*Portland Press.*

"But few of the novelists who have come into prominence lately equal Sidney Luska's happy faculty of uniting interest and pleasure in narrative."—*The Leader, Cleveland, Ohio.*

By the Author of Two Voices.

AS IT WAS WRITTEN.

A Jewish Musician's Story. 1 Vol. 16mo, Extra Cloth, $1.00. Paper, 25 cents.

"It ought to be read by all who enjoy the spell of the human imagination."—*Springfield Republican.*

"The working out of so strange and abnormal a plot without any descent into mere grotesqueness is a triumph of art."—*N. Y. Tribune.*

"It cannot fail to impress itself as an able and moving dramatic effort."—*N. Y. Times.*

"We have seen no book of late years to which the term absorbing in interest could more appropriately be applied."—*Boston Herald.*

MRS. PEIXADA.

1 Vol. 16mo, Extra Cloth, $1.00. Paper, 25 cents.

"It is a pleasure to recognize its fresh ground, its unworn *personnel*, its generous passion, its vivid incident, and the strong young *go* of the whole affair."—W. D. Howells, *The Editor's Study, Harper's Magazine.*

A LATIN-QUARTER COURTSHIP.

1 Vol. 16mo, Extra Cloth, $1.00. Paper, 50 cents.

"By the delightful, tripping, careless nothings that belong to the talk of living youth, by a *bonhomie* that lets us share his enthusiasm, making us almost partakers of his inspiration, by a delicacy of touch that fairly eludes description, by the ideality of his realism, in fact by that ineffable quality of the French known as temperament,—Mr. Harland has in this story given us what we shall not soon forget."—*The Critic, New York.*

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
00012694519